



KALIDASA

MASTER POET AND DRAMATIST

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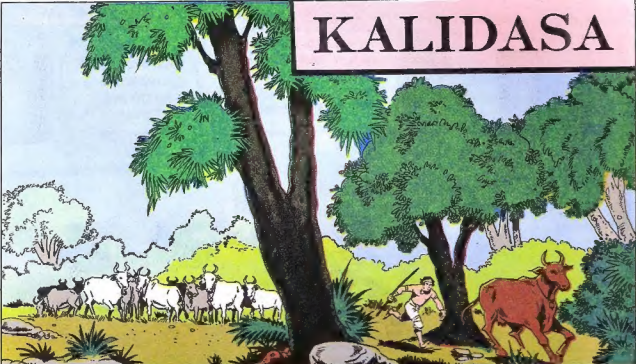
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KALIDASA



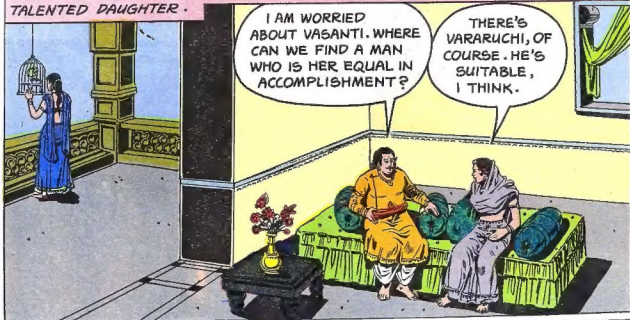
KALIDASA, ONE OF THE GREATEST POETS THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN, WAS DENIED THE CLASSICAL SANSKRIT EDUCATION USUALLY GIVEN TO BRAHMAN BOYS. HE LOST HIS PARENTS WHEN HE WAS BARELY FIVE YEARS OLD AND WAS BROUGHT UP BY A KIND-HEARTED BUT UNLETTERED COWHERD. KALIDASA HELPED HIS FOSTER-FATHER BY LOOKING AFTER HIS CATTLE.

FED ON A DIET OF MILK, CURDS AND BUTTER, KALIDASA GREW INTO A WELL-BUILT, HANDSOME YOUTH. BUT HE WAS AN UNEDUCATED RUSTIC.



WHEN HE WAS NOT BUSY TENDING HIS COWS, HE WAS TO BE FOUND AT THE VILLAGE TEMPLE DEDICATED TO KALI. THIS EARNED HIM THE NAME, 'KALIDASA'.

NOW IT SO HAPPENED THAT THE KING OF VARANASI HAD A BEAUTIFUL AND TALENTED DAUGHTER.



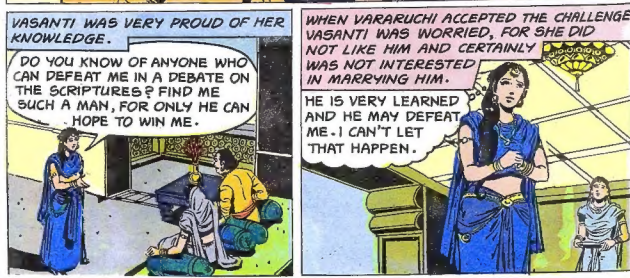
I AM WORRIED ABOUT VASANTI. WHERE CAN WE FIND A MAN WHO IS HER EQUAL IN ACCOMPLISHMENT?

THERE'S VARARUCHI, OF COURSE. HE'S SUITABLE, I THINK.



VARARUCHI? TRUE HE'S A GREAT SCHOLAR, BUT VASANTI IS HARD TO PLEASE AND I WONDER....

WE CAN AT LEAST SUGGEST IT TO HER. LET'S SEE HOW SHE FEELS ABOUT IT.



VASANTI WAS VERY PROUD OF HER KNOWLEDGE.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO CAN DEFEAT ME IN A DEBATE ON THE SCRIPTURES? FIND ME SUCH A MAN, FOR ONLY HE CAN HOPE TO WIN ME.

WHEN VARARUCHI ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE VASANTI WAS WORRIED, FOR SHE DID NOT LIKE HIM AND CERTAINLY WAS NOT INTERESTED IN MARRYING HIM.

HE IS VERY LEARNED AND HE MAY DEFEAT ME. I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.



I'LL PLAY
A TRICK ON
HIM.

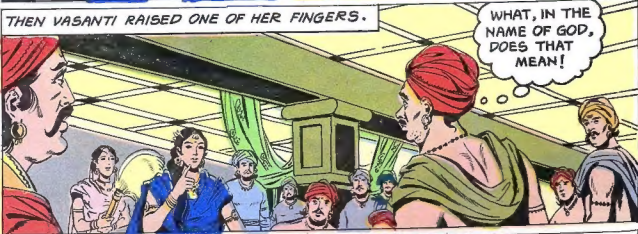


ON THE APPOINTED DAY —

THIS SHALL BE A MUTE
DEBATE. I WILL ASK
QUESTIONS ONLY THROUGH
GESTURES AND YOU MUST
ANSWER THEM.

AGREED

THEN VASANTI RAISED ONE OF HER FINGERS.



WHAT, IN THE NAME OF GOD,
DOES THAT
MEAN!

VARARUCHI ACCEPTED DEFEAT, MUCH TO
VASANTI'S GLEE.



I CAN'T ANSWER
YOUR QUESTION.

SALUTATIONS,
O SCHOLAR,
AND GOODBYE!

VARARUCHI FELT CHEATED AND HUMILIATED.

WHAT AN INSULT!
BUT HOW CAN I TAKE
REVENGE ON THE
KING'S DAUGHTER?

SUDDENLY HE SAW A STRANGE
SIGHT —

HEY, YOUNG MAN!
STOP, OR YOU WILL
FALL DOWN!

MIND
YOUR OWN
BUSINESS!

IT WAS THE BRASH KALIDASA, WHO
WAS CUTTING THE VERY BRANCH ON
WHICH HE WAS SEATED.

THIS MAN IS AN
IDIOT! IT IS POINT-
LESS TO ARGUE
WITH HIM.

VARARUCHI WENT ON HIS WAY. HE HAD
GONE BUT A SHORT DISTANCE WHEN
THE INEVITABLE HAPPENED.

AH..H..H..



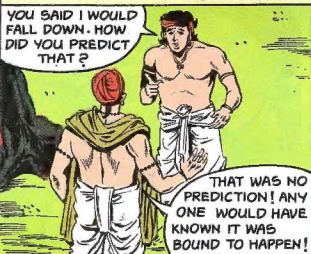
SIR, OH, SIR!
PLEASE
WAIT ...



... I WANT TO
ASK YOU
A QUESTION.

KALIDASA FINALLY OVERTOOK VARARUCHI.

YOU SAID I WOULD
FALL DOWN. HOW
DID YOU PREDICT
THAT ?



THAT WAS NO
PREDICTION! ANY
ONE WOULD HAVE
KNOWN IT WAS
BOUND TO HAPPEN!



BUT I DID NOT
KNOW. YOU MUST
BE A GREAT
ASTROLOGER.



I AM NOT AN
ASTROLOGER.

YES, YES, YOU
ARE! YOU PREDICTED
MY FALL FROM
THE TREE!

LOOK, I AM
NOT AN
ASTROLOGER!

PLEASE, SIR,
HAVE PITY ON ME.
I WANT TO KNOW
WHAT THE FUTURE
HOLDS FOR ME.

THE FUTURE?
MAYBE YOU'LL
MARRY A
PRINCESS!

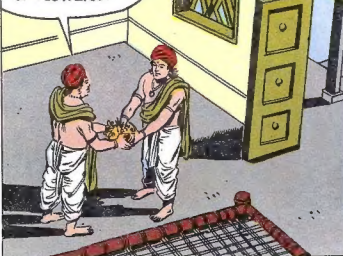
... A PRINCESS ? OF
COURSE, I'M THINKING
OF PRINCESS VASANTI!
I COULD USE THIS
BOOR TO PAY HER
BACK WITH A TRICK
OF MY OWN!

DID YOU SAY
"A PRINCESS"?
BUT THERE ARE
NO PRINCESSES
HERE!

JUST DO AS
I SAY — AND THE
PREDICTION WILL
COME TRUE!

VARARUCHI TOOK KALIDASA TO HIS HOUSE AND MADE HIM CHANGE INTO THE ATTIRE OF A SCHOLAR.

AH! NOW YOU LOOK LIKE A PANDIT. YOU'LL BE A GREAT SUCCESS AT THE PALACE! HERE, HOLD THIS BASKET OF FLOWERS.



VARARUCHI AND KALIDASA MADE THEIR WAY TO THE PALACE.

NOW, DON'T FORGET — WHEN YOU SEE THE KING, SHOWER FLOWERS ON HIM WHILE UTTERING THE BLESSING, "OM SWASTI".

I'LL DO EXACTLY AS YOU SAY.



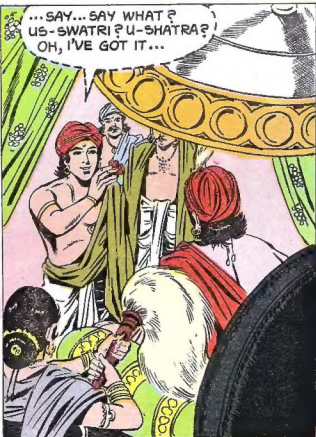
AT THE PALACE —

THERE'S THE KING!

RIGHT, FIRST I MUST SHOWER FLOWERS ON THE KING; THEN I MUST SAY...



... SAY... SAY WHAT? US-SWATRI? U-SHATRA? OH, I'VE GOT IT...



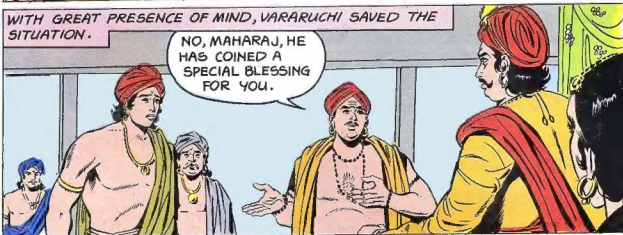


...USHTRA!



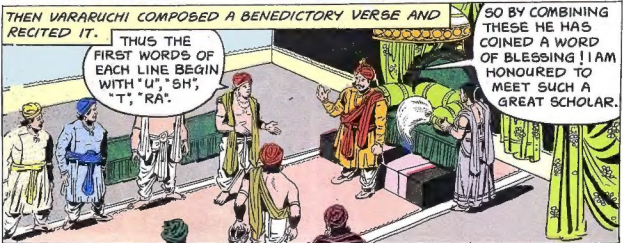
WHAT'S THAT? YOU CALLED ME A CAMEL?

WITH GREAT PRESENCE OF MIND, VARARUCHI SAVED THE SITUATION.



NO, MAHARAJ, HE HAS COINED A SPECIAL BLESSING FOR YOU.

THEN VARARUCHI COMPOSED A BENEDICTORY VERSE AND RECITED IT.



THUS THE FIRST WORDS OF EACH LINE BEGIN WITH "U", "SH", "T", "RA".

SO BY COMBINING THESE HE HAS COINED A WORD OF BLESSING!! I AM HONOURED TO MEET SUCH A GREAT SCHOLAR.

MAHARAJ, MAY I PRESENT
TO YOU PANDIT KALIDASA?
HE HAS COME HERE TO
ACCEPT PRINCESS
VASANTI'S CHALLENGE.

I AM GLAD TO MEET
SOMEONE BRAVE
ENOUGH TO DO
THAT!

HE IS PREPARED TO
DEBATE WITH THE
PRINCESS—BUT ON
ONE CONDITION; HE,
TOO, LIKE HER, WILL
NOT SPEAK.

THAT'S FAIR
ENOUGH. A DATE
SHALL BE SET FOR
A DEBATE ON
THE SCRIPTURES.

ON THE APPOINTED DAY —

BE CAREFUL,
KALIDASA. YOU
ALMOST RUINED
EVERYTHING BY
CALLING THE
KING A CAMEL.

I AM
SORRY.

NOW, DO WHAT YOU LIKE
WITH YOUR HANDS, BUT
DON'T OPEN YOUR MOUTH.
OR YOU'LL LOSE YOUR
CHANCE OF MARRYING
THE PRINCESS.

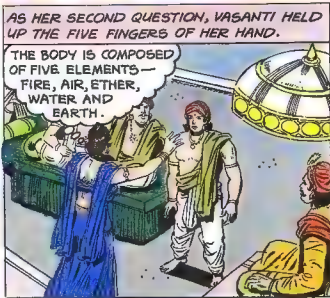
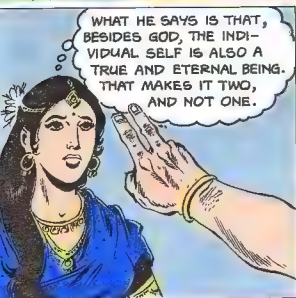
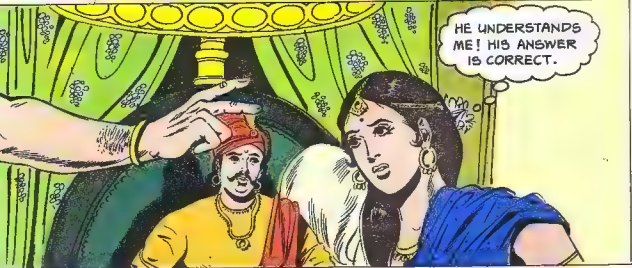
THE MUTE DEBATE BEGAN. VASANTI .
RAISED ONE FINGER JUST AS SHE HAD
DONE EARLIER WITH VARARUCHI.

WHAT A HANDSOME MAN!
BUT WILL HE GUESS
THAT MY SIGN MEANS
GOD IS THE ONLY
TRUE AND ETERNAL
BEING ?

BUT POOR KALIDASA UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING QUITE
DIFFERENT.

OH, SO YOU WANT
TO POKE OUT
ONE OF MY
EYES!

WELL, I WILL
POKE OUT
BOTH OF
YOURS!



AMAR CHANDRA

AH, THE PERFECT ANSWER!
THOUGH THE PHYSICAL
ELEMENTS ARE FIVE, THEY
BECOME ONE IN THE
HUMAN BODY.

PRINCESS VASANTI ACKNOWLEDGED DEFEAT. SHE WAS
MARRIED TO KALIDASA.

THE FOOL SUCCEEDED, WHERE
I, FOR ALL MY LEARNING,
FAILED. THE PRINCESS, LIKE
ANY FOOLISH MAIDEN,
HAS FALLEN FOR HIS
GOOD LOOKS!

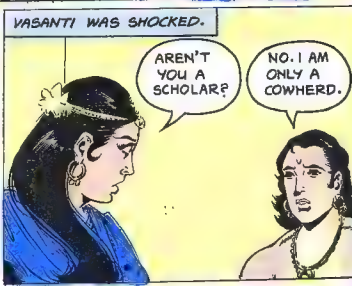
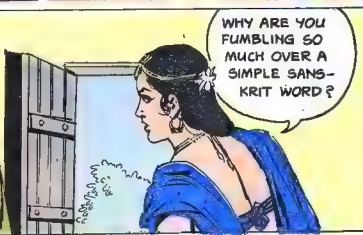
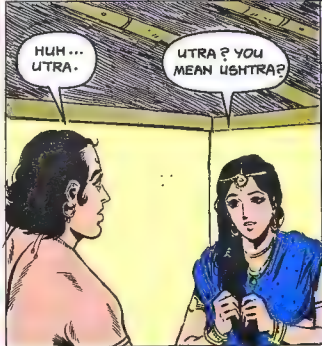
AFTER THE CEREMONY, KALIDASA TOOK
THE PRINCESS TO HIS HUT.

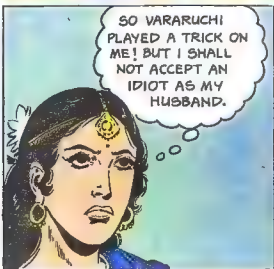
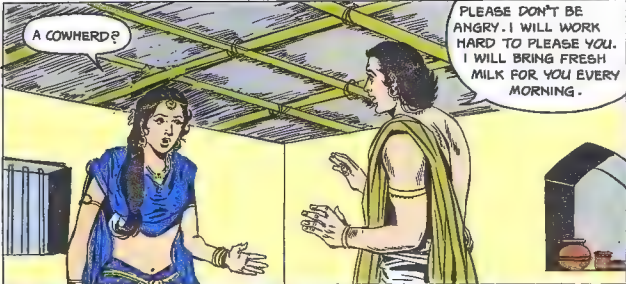
TRULY, MY HUSBAND
LIVES AUSTERELY.
BUT I DON'T MIND. HIS
LEARNING WILL MAKE
HIM A LIVELY
COMPANION....

JUST THEN A CAMEL'S CRY WAS HEARD—

NEH...
NEH...

VASANTI REMEMBERED THAT KALIDASA
HAD CALLED HER FATHER A CAMEL —



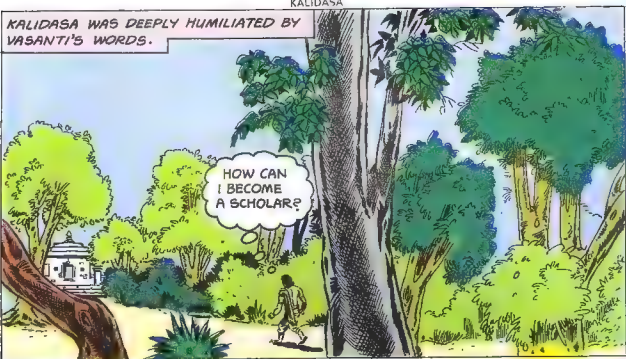


TO VASANTI'S SURPRISE AND DISMAY, HE LEFT IMMEDIATELY.

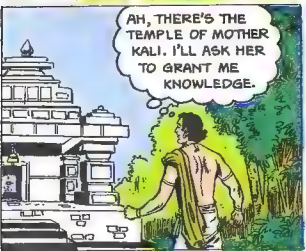


KALIDASA WAS DEEPLY HUMILIATED BY VASANTI'S WORDS.

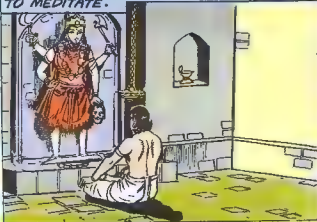
HOW CAN
I BECOME
A SCHOLAR?



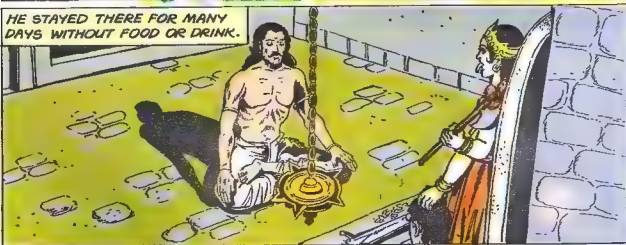
AH, THERE'S THE
TEMPLE OF MOTHER
KALI. I'LL ASK HER
TO GRANT ME
KNOWLEDGE.



**INSIDE THE TEMPLE KALIDASA BEGAN
TO MEDITATE.**



**HE STAYED THERE FOR MANY
DAYS WITHOUT FOOD OR DRINK.**





SINCE YOU WILL NOT GRANT MY WISH, O MOTHER, I SHALL SACRIFICE MYSELF AT YOUR FEET.

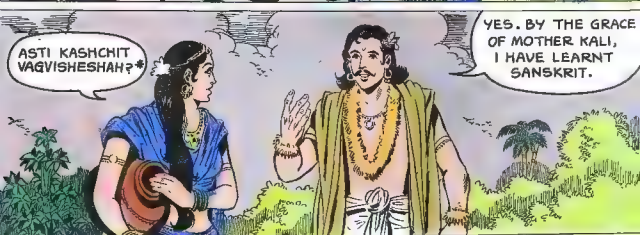
THE YOUNG MAN WAS OVERWHELMED BY DEVOTION AND GRATITUDE. HE RETURNED HOME GLOWING WITH HAPPINESS.



DON'T DO IT, SON! I AM PLEASED WITH YOU. I GRANT YOUR WISH. YOU SHALL BE ENDOWED WITH GENIUS.



HE IS BACK! I AM SO HAPPY!



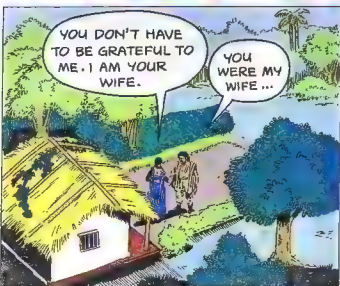
ASTI KASHCHIT VAGVISHESHAN?

YES. BY THE GRACE OF MOTHER KALI, I HAVE LEARNT SANSKRIT.

* HAS YOUR SPEECH IMPROVED ?

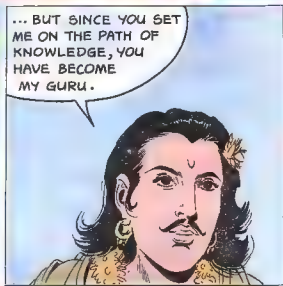


AND SINCE IT WAS YOU WHO INSPIRED ME TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE, I SHALL BEGIN THREE OF MY WORKS WITH EACH ONE OF THE WORDS YOU JUST UTTERED AS A TOKEN OF MY GRATITUDE.



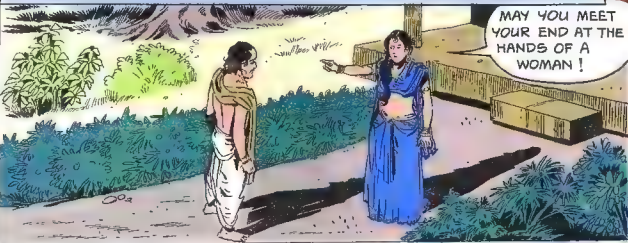
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE GRATEFUL TO ME. I AM YOUR WIFE.

YOU WERE MY WIFE...



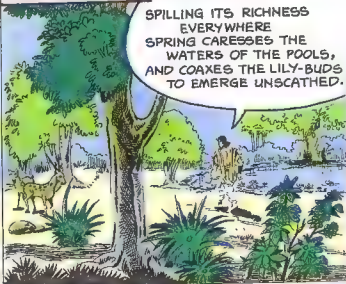
... BUT SINCE YOU SET ME ON THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE, YOU HAVE BECOME MY GURU.

VASANTI WAS SHOCKED AND ENRAGED. WHEN SHE FOUND THAT KALIDASA WOULD NOT NOW ACCEPT HER AS HIS WIFE, SHE UTTERED A CURSE.



MAY YOU MEET YOUR END AT THE HANDS OF A WOMAN!

AFTER THIS KALIDASA LED THE LIFE OF A WANDERER. SURROUNDED BY THE BEAUTY OF NATURE, HE WAS MOVED TO WRITE POETRY IN SANSKRIT, WHICH HE HAD BY NOW MASTERED.



SPILLING ITS RICHNESS EVERYWHERE
SPRING CARESSES THE
WATERS OF THE POOLS,
AND COAXES THE LILY-BUDS
TO EMERGE UNSCATHED.

CLOUDS CLASH
AND THUNDER RESOUNDS LIKE
THE BEAT OF DRUM.
INDRA'S COLOURFUL BOW
GLITTERS ACROSS THE SKY
WHILE THE LIGHTNING
SERVES FOR A STRING.

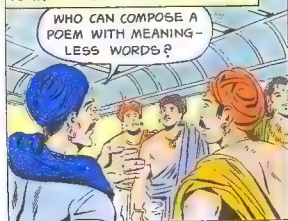


FROM TIME TO TIME THE POET STOPPED AT VARIOUS COURTS ON THE WAY. BUT HIS FAVOURITE WAS THE COURT OF KING BHOJA AT DHARA. HE WAS A GREAT PATRON OF ART AND LITERATURE. ONE DAY —



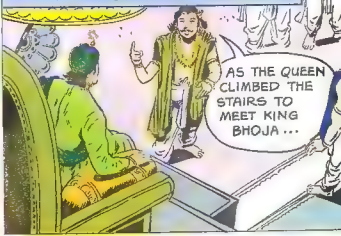
CAN ANYONE COMPOSE
A VERSE ENDING WITH
"TAATAM, TATAM, TAM,
TATATAM, TATAM, TAH?"

ALL THE SCHOLARS PRESENT AT COURT WERE PERPLEXED.



WHO CAN COMPOSE A
POEM WITH MEANING-
LESS WORDS?

BUT KALIDASA, A READY WIT, COULD.



AS THE QUEEN
CLIMBED THE
STAIRS TO
MEET KING
BHOJA ...

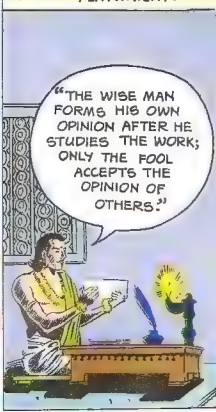


KALIDASA NOW FELT INSPIRED TO WRITE A PLAY, BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCE OF COURT LIFE.

I'LL WRITE ABOUT A KING'S LOVE FOR A BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN.

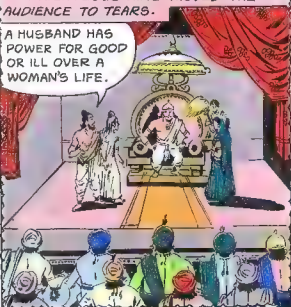


KALIDASA'S FIRST PLAY WAS CALLED "MALAVIKA-AGNIMITRA". THE PROLOGUE EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE TO BE ACCEPTED AS A PLAYWRIGHT.

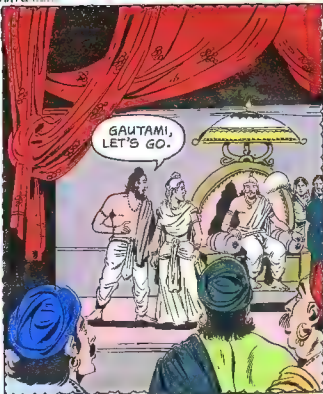


THE PLAY WAS VERY WELL-RECEIVED. HIS NEXT PLAY, "SHAKUNTALA", WAS EVEN MORE SUCCESSFUL. THE STORY OF THE LOVING WIFE DESERTED BY THE RIGHTEOUS KING MOVED THE AUDIENCE TO TEARS.

A HUSBAND HAS POWER FOR GOOD OR ILL OVER A WOMAN'S LIFE.



GAUTAMI,
LET'S GO.



I'VE BEEN
DESERTED BY
THE KING. DO
YOU ALSO
FORSAKE ME?



OH,
SHAKUNTALA!

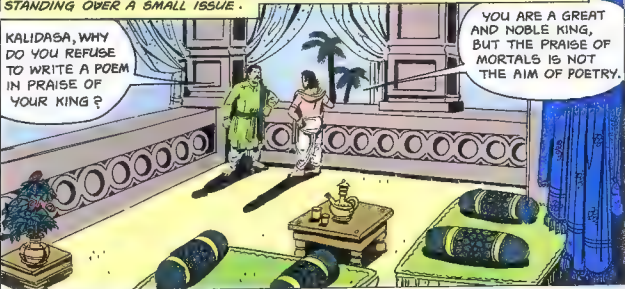
KALIDASA ALSO WROTE THE POEMS, "KUMARASAMBHAVA", "MEGHADUTA", "RAGHU-VAMSHA" AND "RITU-SAMHARA", WHICH GREATLY ADDED TO HIS FAME.



THOUGH KING BHOJA VALUED KALIDASA'S FRIENDSHIP, THEY HAD A MISUNDERSTANDING OVER A SMALL ISSUE.

KALIDASA, WHY DO YOU REFUSE TO WRITE A POEM IN PRAISE OF YOUR KING?

YOU ARE A GREAT AND NOBLE KING, BUT THE PRAISE OF MORTALS IS NOT THE AIM OF POETRY.

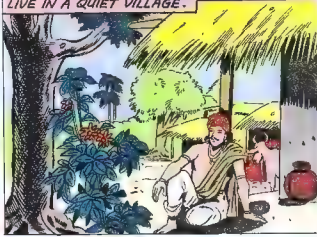


YOU STAY IN MY COURT AND YET YOU WON'T PRAISE ME AS OTHER POETS DO. ISN'T THAT SURPRISING?

I SUPPOSE IT IS.



SADDENED BY KING BHOJA'S ATTITUDE, KALIDASA LEFT HIS COURT AND WENT TO LIVE IN A QUIET VILLAGE.



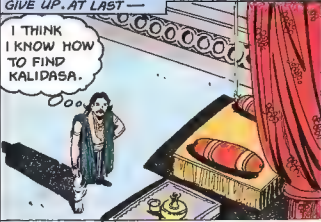
A LONG TIME PASSED. KING BHOJA BECAME WORRIED.

I MISS MY FRIEND. I MUST FIND HIM.

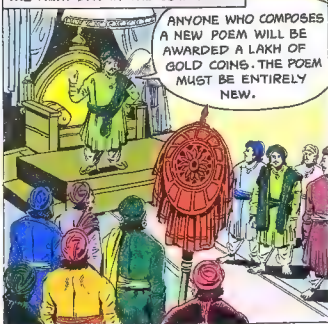


THE KING'S MEN SEARCHED FOR KALIDASA IN VAIN. BUT KING BHOJA WOULD NOT GIVE UP. AT LAST —

I THINK I KNOW HOW TO FIND KALIDASA.



THE NEXT DAY IN THE COURT —



ANYONE WHO COMPOSES A NEW POEM WILL BE AWARDED A LAKH OF GOLD COINS. THE POEM MUST BE ENTIRELY NEW.

THEN THE KING CALLED A MEETING OF HIS PANDITS.



REJECT ALL POEMS TILL KALIDASA COMES WITH HIS.

MANY POETS RECITED THEIR VERSES —

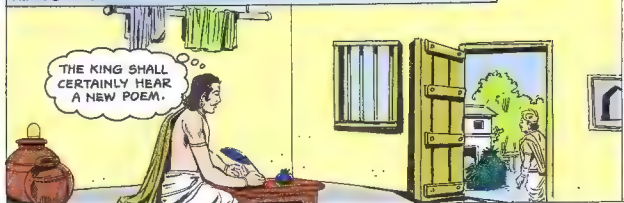


THAT'S NOT A NEW POEM!

I HAVE HEARD THIS ONE BEFORE.

SO HAVE I!

FINALLY THE NEWS OF THE AWARD REACHED KALIDASA. HE UNDERSTOOD THE KING'S PLAN AT ONCE AND FELT SORRY FOR THE POOR POETS.



THE KING SHALL CERTAINLY HEAR A NEW POEM.

HE CALLED A VILLAGER WHO WAS PASSING BY HIS HUT.

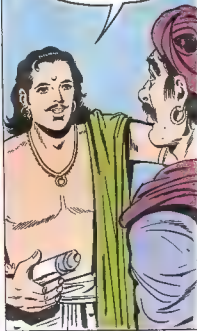
TAKE THIS POEM
TO KING BHOJA AND
TELL HIM YOU
WROTE IT. HE WILL
PAY YOU WELL
FOR IT.



BUT I AM
NEITHER A POET
NOR A SCHOLAR!

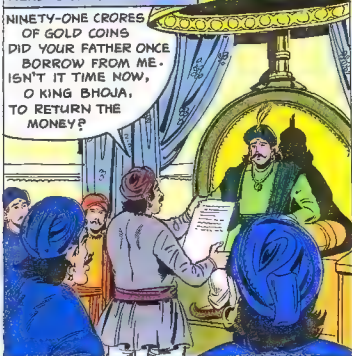


YOU WANT THE
MONEY, DON'T YOU?
THEN DO AS I SAY.
NO HARM WILL
COME TO YOU.



THE VILLAGER WENT TO THE PALACE AND
READ OUT THE POEM —

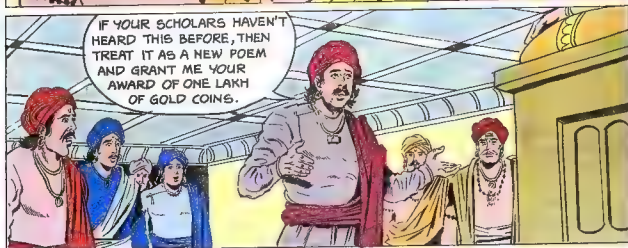
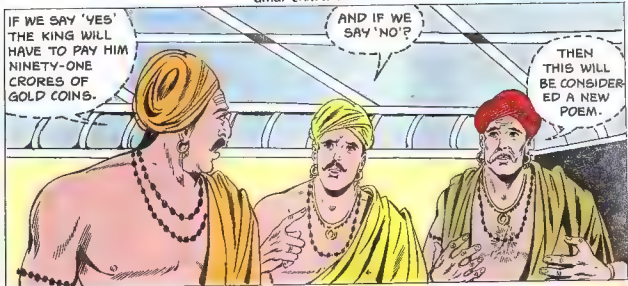
NINETY-ONE CRORES
OF GOLD COINS
DID YOUR FATHER ONCE
BORROW FROM ME.
ISN'T IT TIME NOW,
O KING BHOJA,
TO RETURN THE
MONEY?



THE PANDITS WERE SHOCKED INTO
SILENCE.

SURELY YOU
HAVE HEARD MY
POEM BEFORE?





YOU MAY KEEP
THE MONEY. BUT
TELL ME THE TRUTH.
IF YOU LIE, YOU WILL
BE PUNISHED.

I DID NOT
WRITE IT.
A SCHOLAR IN
MY VILLAGE
WROTE IT.

THAT COULD ONLY
BE KALIDASA!
WHERE IS YOUR
VILLAGE? I WANT
TO MEET THIS
SCHOLAR.

THEY REACHED THE VILLAGE —

THAT'S WHERE
HE LIVES.

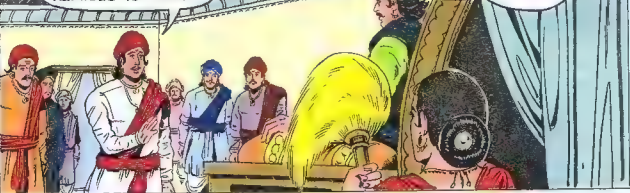
KALIDASA! I KNEW ONLY
YOU COULD HAVE THOUGHT
OF SENDING THE VILLAGER
WITH THAT POEM. FORGIVE
MY UNBECOMING DEMAND
AND COME BACK TO MY
COURT, O KING OF
POETS!

IF YOU WISH
IT, NOBLE
KING!

BUT THEY CONTINUED TO HAVE DIFFERENCES. WHENEVER THEY QUARRELLED, KALIDASA WOULD GO AWAY AND WOULD RETURN ONLY AFTER MUCH COAXING. ONE DAY, HOWEVER, HE REFUSED TO RETURN.

MAHARAJ, KALIDASA IS IN A VILLAGE FIFTY MILES AWAY. I HAVE PLEADED WITH HIM, BUT HE REFUSES TO RETURN.

I WILL BRING HIM BACK MYSELF.



KING BHOJA DECIDED TO FIND OUT WHAT KALIDASA REALLY FELT ABOUT HIM.

I'LL GO AND MEET KALIDASA IN DISGUISE.



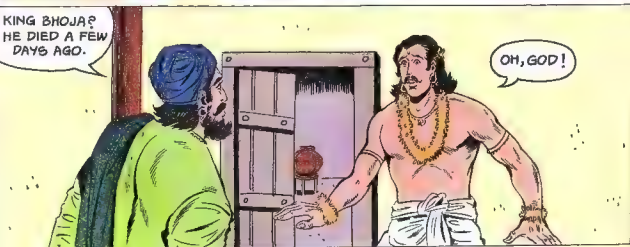
SALUTATIONS!
I COME FROM
DHARA.

WELCOME.
HOW IS KING
BHOJA?



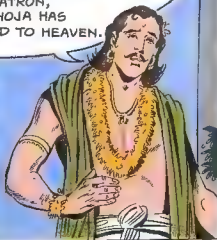
KING BHOJA?
HE DIED A FEW
DAYS AGO.

OH, GOD!



KALIDASA WAS SO OVERWHELMED, HIS GRIEF TOOK THE FORM OF VERSE.

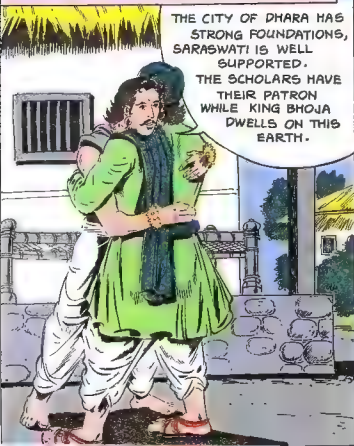
THE CITY OF DHARA HAS LOST ITS FOUNDATIONS, SARASWATI, THE GODDESS OF LEARNING, HAS LOST HER SUPPORT, THE SCHOLARS HAVE LOST THEIR PATRON, FOR KING BHOJA HAS DEPARTED TO HEAVEN.



AT LAST — A POEM WHICH PRAISES ME! KALIDASA, I THOUGHT I'D NEVER GET YOU TO WRITE ONE!

KALIDASA NOW RECOGNISED THE KING. SO HE MADE MINOR CHANGES IN HIS VERSE —

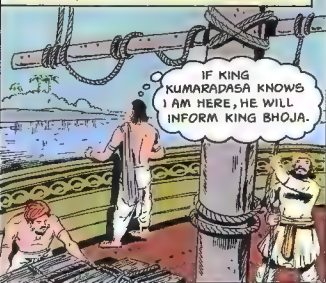
THE CITY OF DHARA HAS STRONG FOUNDATIONS, SARASWATI IS WELL SUPPORTED. THE SCHOLARS HAVE THEIR PATRON WHILE KING BHOJA DWELLS ON THIS EARTH.



SOME TIME LATER, AFTER ANOTHER QUARREL WITH KING BHOJA, KALIDASA SET SAIL FOR LANKA.



THOUGH KALIDASA WAS ALWAYS WELCOME AT THE COURT OF KUMARADASA, THE KING OF LANKA, HE DECIDED NOT TO GO THERE.

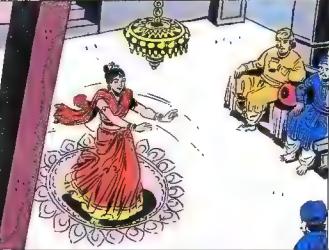


IF KING KUMARADASA KNOWS I AM HERE, HE WILL INFORM KING BHOJA.



I DON'T WANT TO RETURN TO DHARA JUST YET.

AVOIDING THE COURT, KALIDASA WENT TO LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF A DANCER.



KING KUMARADASA WAS, LIKE KING BHOJA, A GREAT PATRON OF LITERATURE AND ART.



HERE IS A REWARD OF A THOUSAND GOLD COINS FOR YOUR EXCELLENT COMPOSITION.



THE KING WILL AWARD A LAKH OF GOLD COINS TO ANYONE WHO CAN COMPLETE THIS VERSE.

NOBODY COULD COMPLETE THE VERSE.
AFTER SEVERAL DAYS —

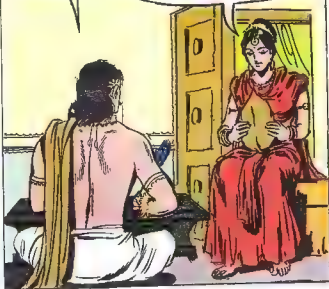
...THE TASK
SET BY THE KING
IS VERY DIFFICULT.

LET ME
TRY —



WHAT IS
THE VERSE?

"WE HAVE HEARD OF A LOTUS
ISSUING FROM ANOTHER —
BUT NO ONE HAS SEEN
SUCH A THING".



BUT I HAVE —

YOU HAVE!
WHERE?

RIGHT HERE.
AT THIS VERY
MOMENT I BEHOLD
THE LOTUS EYES
IN YOUR LOTUS
FACE.



THAT'S PERFECT!
LET'S WRITE IT
DOWN!

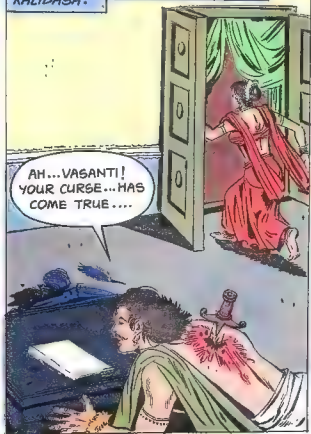


THE KING WILL SURELY
GIVE AN AWARD FOR THIS
VERSE. WHY SHOULD I LET
KALIDASA HAVE THE MONEY?
I COULD USE IT TO BUY
MYSELF SOME ORNAMENTS.

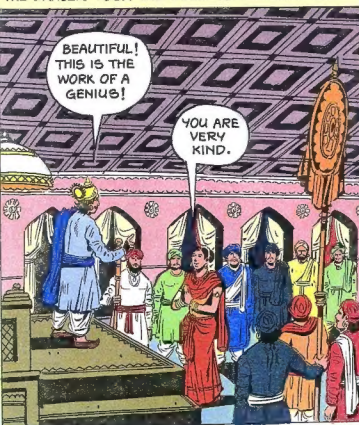


THE NEXT MOMENT SHE STABBED
KALIDASA.

AH...VASANTI!
YOUR CURSE...HAS
COME TRUE....

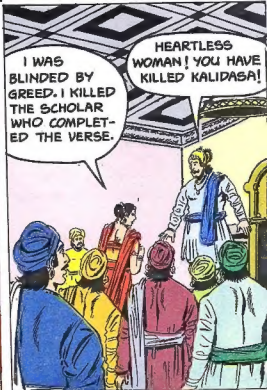


THE DANCER TOOK THE POEM TO KUMARADASA —



THE WOMAN'S NERVOUS BEHAVIOUR
ADDED TO KUMARADASA'S SUSPICIONS.





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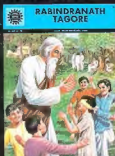


KALIDASA

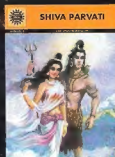
Kalidasa owes his fame to his Sanskrit play *Abhijnana-Shakuntala* (*Shakuntala Recognised by the Token Ring*), the long epic poem *Kumara-Sambhava* (*Birth of Kumara*) and the lyric poem *Meghaduta* (*Cloud Messenger*).

Kalidasa, who lived some time in the middle of the 4th and early 5th centuries A.D., has left no account of his life. According to popular legends, he owed his ingenuity as much to Goddess Kali's blessings as to his own talents.

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